



Illustration by John H. Rumely,
From 'Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest'

MALACOTHRIX TORREYI **DESERT DANDELION**

Desert Dandelion is a taprooted annual with milky sap and a basal rosette of leaves giving rise to 1-several erect or ascending stems that are 10-30 cm high. The basal leaves are up to 10 cm long, have petioles, and are deeply pinnately divided into toothed and pointed lobes. The few stem leaves are reduced upwardly. The foliage has sparse long hair when young but is glabrous with age, other than the sparse, glandular hairs in the inflorescence. The several stalked flower heads arise from reduced upper leaves, or bracts, in an open inflorescence. Flower heads nod in the bud but become erect in flower. Each is 8-13 mm high with 2 series of involucre bracts, the outer of which is very short, and the inner of which is long-pointed. Rays are yellow and ca. 1 cm long, and disk flowers are lacking. The cylindrical achenes are 5-ribbed, 3-4 mm long, and topped by a pappus of numerous unbranched, white bristles that are united at the base and fall as one when seeds mature. Flowering in June.

The pappus bristles of *CREPIS* are separate. *SONCHUS* has bell-shaped flower heads and flattened achenes. A hand lens and technical key are needed for positive identification.